Local Governments in British Africa

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The role of institutions in shaping development

- New Institutional Economics
  - Rules of the game that shape our incentives are fundamental factor driving economic growth (North, 1990).

- Origins of institutions in Africa
  1. Colonial institutions
  2. Pre-colonial institutions

- How did colonialism change political institutions in Africa?
  1. Little change because of ”thin white line,” and perpetuation of pre-colonial authoritarian institutions (Herbst, 2000).
  2. Lots of change, created despotism by arbitrarily creating new chiefs (Mamdani, 1996).

Why local institutions?

- Local level governments vital link between majority of African population and the skeletal European Administrations

- How were pre-colonial societies integrated into colonial administrations?

- We bring new systematic data on pre-colonial and colonial institutions at the local level
  - Pre-colonial data: compilation of ethnographic and historical sources
  - Colonial data: extensive survey information on the nature and form of local administrations in British Africa (Hailey surveys) combined with information of budget allocations of local governments

African institutions prior to colonization

- Wide range of indigenous institutions in place prior to European conquest
  - Complex, hierarchical and highly centralized versus horizontally oriented based on villages or clans
- Considerable upheaval throughout the 19th century, linked to external and internal shifts

- Colonial conquest brough disruptions to indigenous systems

Native Authority system under British rule

- To minimize expenditures by the British treasury, colonial administrations were required to be financially self-sufficient.
  - Minimum number of European administrators
  - Large territories under administration
- One way to reduce costs of administration was to ‘integrate existing local authorities and social systems into the structure of colonial government’ (Berry, 1992: 329)

- Important in this process was identifying appropriate elites
  - A process of political negotiation on both sides

A short history of the Native Authority system

Phase 1: early colonial period

- NAs created through the identification of an individual by colonial officials during the establishment of colonial government (dates varied).
- British authorities stressed need for connection to pre-colonial hierarchies (though did not always succeed)

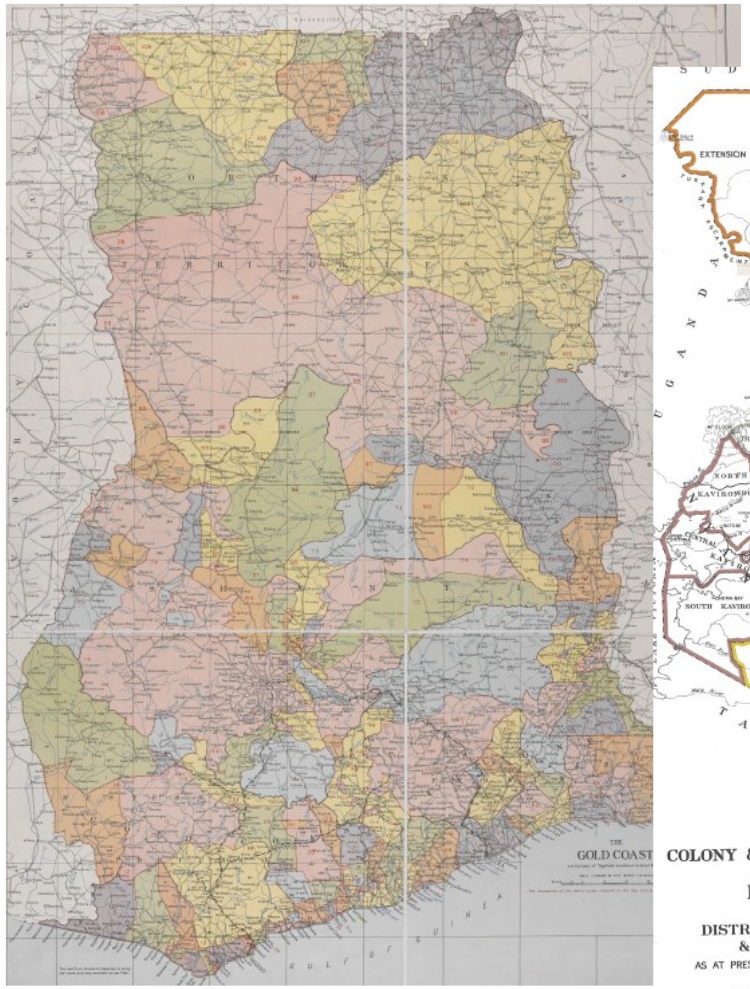
Phase 2: indirect rule and the 'mature' NA system

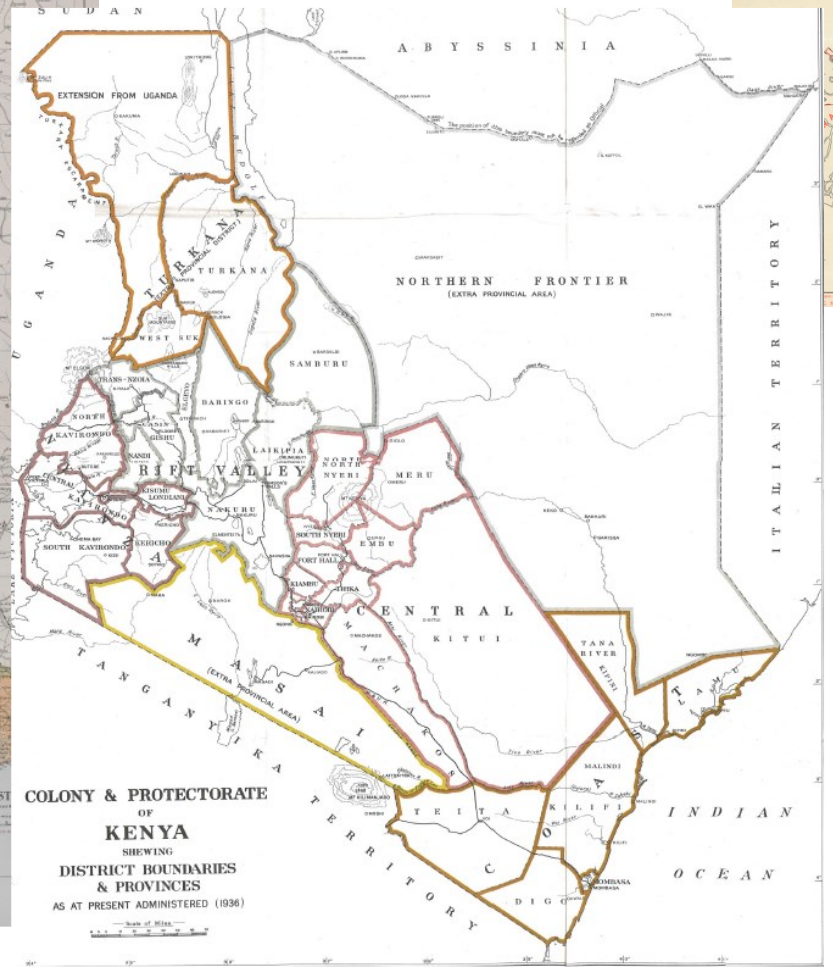
- Expanded colonial development efforts from the 1930s relied on decentralization of taxation and service provision
- Effort to transform individual NAs into local governments (council, treasury, courts) along British lines while maintaining links to indigenous traditions
- Frequently involved tension between existing and new elites

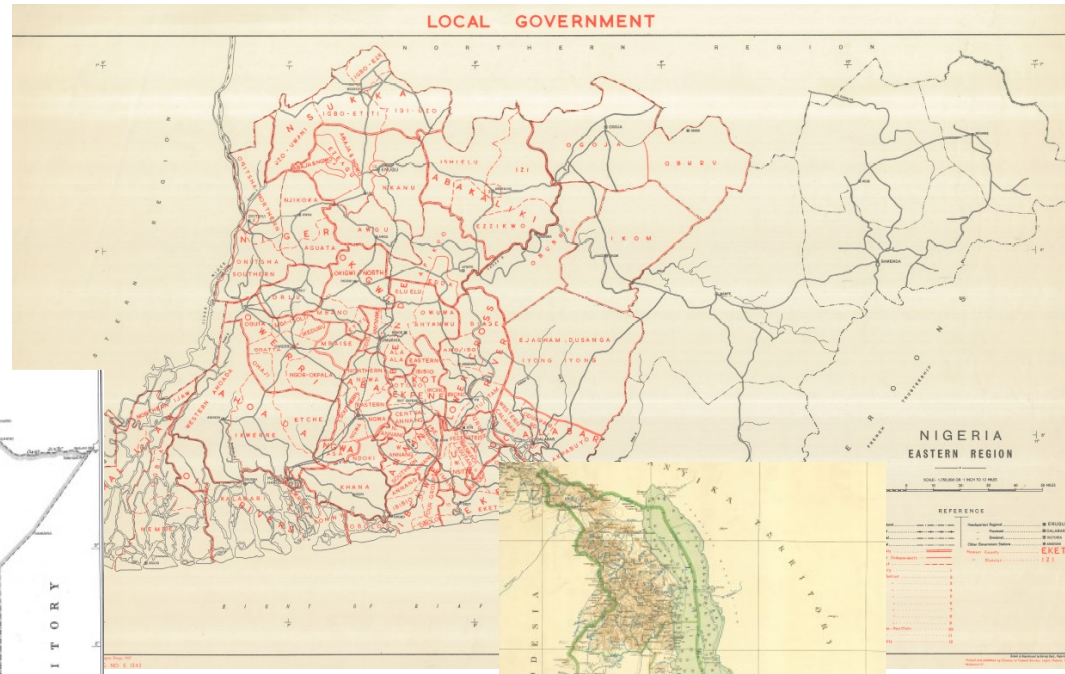
Tasks of Native Authorities:

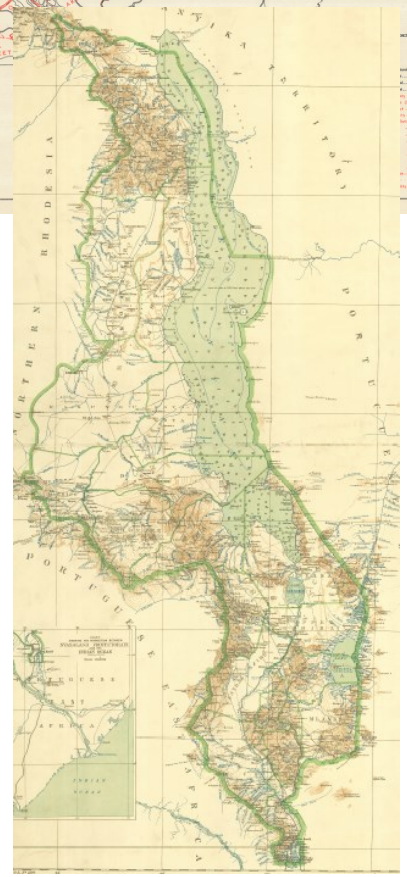
- Maintaining law and order, collecting taxes, providing local public goods, administering justice and arbitrating disputes according to customary law (native courts)

Locating native authorities

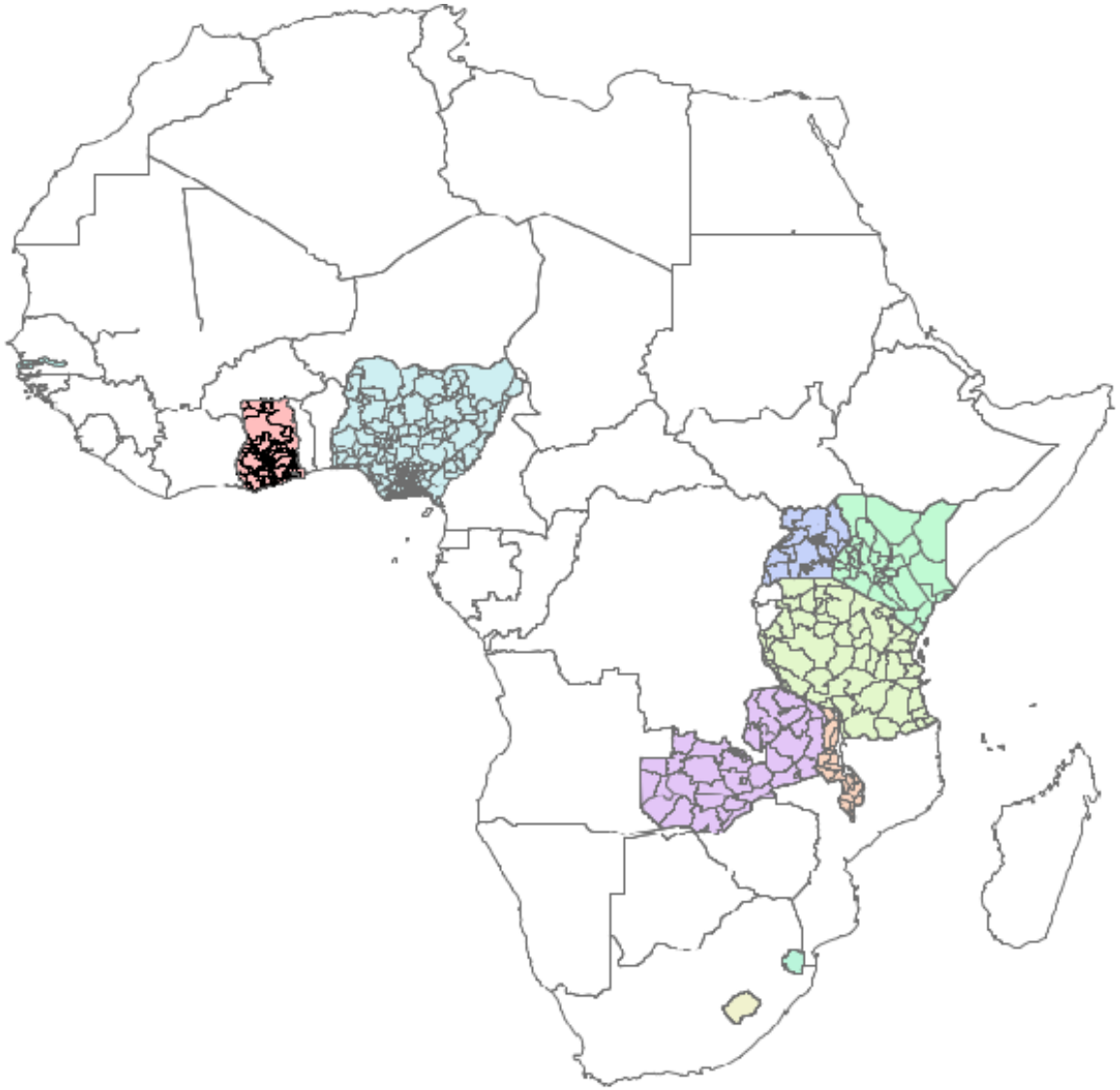








Locating Native Authorities



Organization of Native Authorities

1. Which actors were ‘gazetted’ with rule making power
   - Solo chief, council only, chief and council, federal councils, confederacy or district officer
2. How chiefs gained their position
3. The composition of the council
   - Who was eligible for each seat, who selected members, female participation, literacy

- Data source: the Hailey archives

Organization of Native Authority institutions

Table 1: Summary Statistics for Native Authority Institutions

Colony	# NTs	# NAs per NT	Solo Chief	Chief & Council	Council only	Federal council	Confed-eracy	DO
Nigeria	199	1.8	0.24	0.15	0.59	0.00	0.01	0.01
Eastern	88	2.1	0.02	0.02	0.96	0.00	0.00	0.00
Northern	59	2.0	0.78	0.11	0.06	0.00	0.05	0.01
Western	39	1.3	0.00	0.56	0.44	0.00	0.00	0.00
Colony	13	1.0	0.00	0.00	0.92	0.00	0.00	0.08
Gold Coast	87	1.0	0.04	0.83	0.02	0.01	0.14	0.00
Tanganyika	52	7.1	0.37	0.05	0.13	0.46	0.02	0.00
N. Rhodesia	42	1.1	0.00	0.76	0.24	0.00	0.00	0.00
Kenya	26	15.1	0.00	0.00	0.00	1.00	0.00	0.00
Nyasaland	16	6.5	0.54	0.00	0.01	0.44	0.00	0.01
Uganda	13	4.9	0.00	0.31	0.00	0.62	0.00	0.08
Gambia	13	1.0	0.00	0.92	0.08	0.00	0.00	0.00
High Commission territories	11	1.6	0.00	1.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Zanzibar	1	1.0	1.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Overall	460	3.2	0.18	0.36	0.30	0.14	0.03	0.01

Source: Bolt, Gardner, Kohler, Paine and Robinson (2021)

Composition of the councils

Table 2: Composition of Councils

	Traditional elite		Non-traditional		Chief appointed		British appointed	
	Any	Plurality	Any	Plurality	Any	Plurality	Any	Plurality
Northern Nigeria (N=53)	62%	62%	15%	4%	32%	32%	2%	2%
Western Nigeria (N=39)	95%	85%	80%	15%	0%	0%	5%	0%
Eastern Nigeria (N=78)	47%	1%	100%	99%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Gold Coast (N=87)	98%	98%	10%	1%	3%	1%	2%	0%
Kenya (N=23)	0%	0%	91%	79%	0%	0%	100%	16%
Averages	69%	52%	54%	38%	7%	6%	10%	2%

Source: Bolt, Gardner, Kohler, Paine and Robinson (2021)

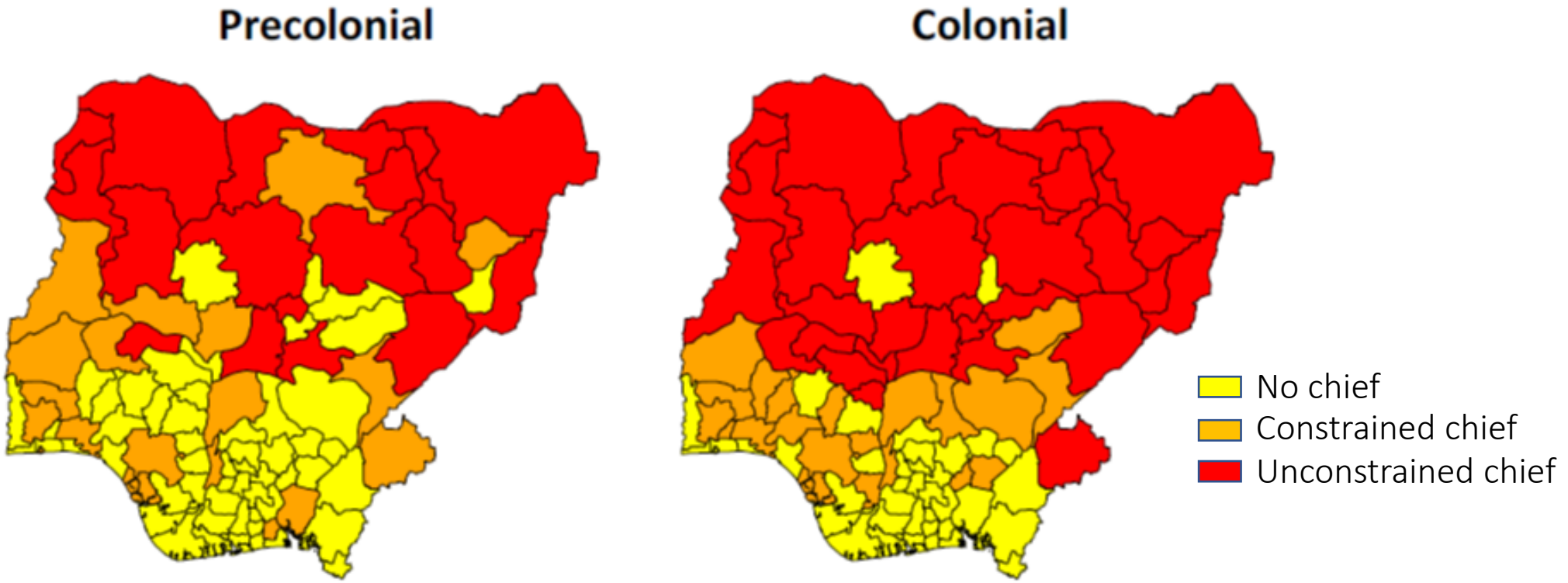
The role of councils in pre-colonial institutions

Table 3: Summary Statistics for Precolonial Institutions

Colony	# NTs	Unconstrained chief	Constrained chief	No Chief
Nigeria	199	0.15	0.10	0.76
Eastern	88	0.00	0.05	0.95
Northern	59	0.49	0.12	0.39
Western	39	0.00	0.18	0.82
Colony	13	0.00	0.08	0.92
Gold Coast	87	0.00	0.34	0.66
Tanganyika	52	0.04	0.00	0.96
N Rhodesia	42	0.00	0.05	0.95
Kenya	26	0.00	0.00	1.00
Nyasaland	16	0.00	0.00	1.00
Uganda	13	0.23	0.00	0.77
Gambia	13	0.00	0.00	1.00
High Commission territories	11	0.00	0.91	0.09
Zanzibar	1	1.00	0.00	0.00
Average	460	0.08	0.13	0.79

Source: Bolt, Gardner, Kohler, Paine and Robinson (2021)

Institutional persistence?



Source: Bolt, Gardner, Kohler, Paine and Robinson (2021)

Institutional persistence (1)

Link between pre-colonial constrains and NA council

	Council-only NA	Chief and council NA	Solo chief NA
No pre-colonial chief	36%	30%	12%
Constrained chief	8%	82%	10%
Unconstrained chief	1%	9%	84%

Source: Bolt, Gardner, Kohler, Paine and Robinson (2021)

Institutional persistence (2)

Link between pre-colonial constraints and composition of NA council

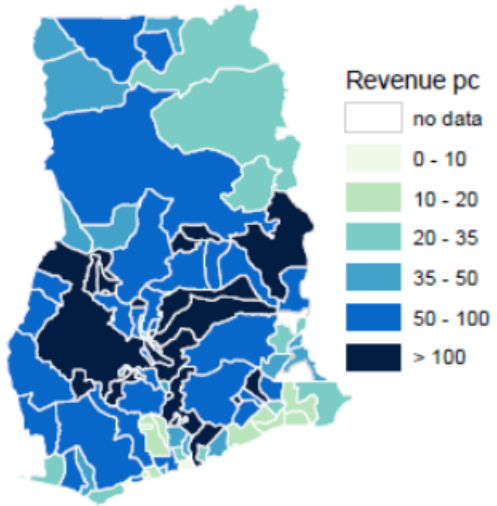
	Nontraditional	Traditional	Chief-appointed	British-appointed
No precolonial chief	48%	46%	4%	2%
Constrained chief	12%	82%	4%	2%
Unconstrained chief	0%	58%	41%	0%

Source: Bolt, Gardner, Kohler, Paine and Robinson (2021)

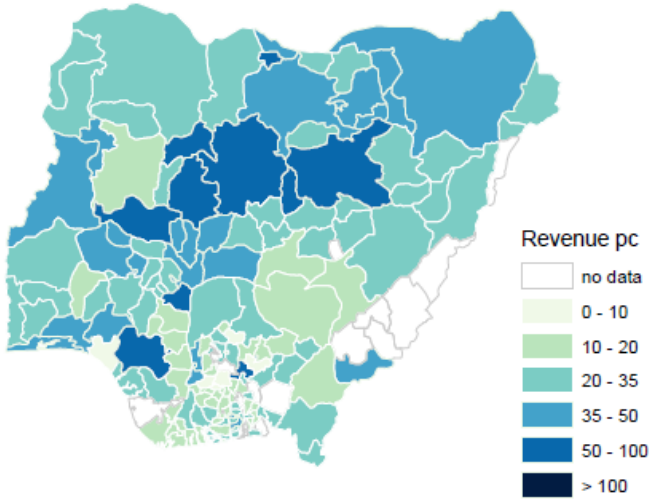
How did local institutions matter?

- Native Authority capacity for tax collection and spending patterns
- 1: Revenue collection: per capita revenue

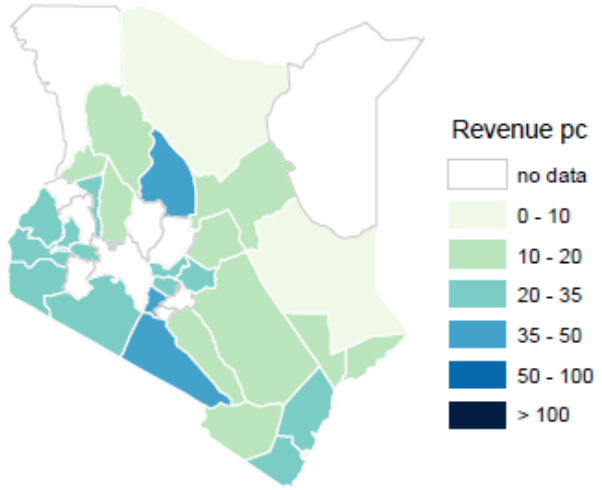
Ghana



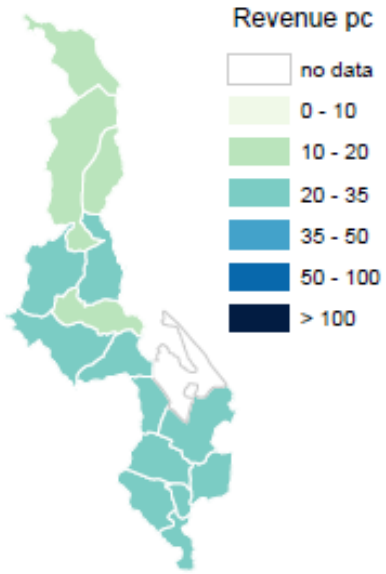
Nigeria



Kenya



Malawi



Source: Bolt and Gardner (2021)

Local institutions and local capacity

	Revenue per capita	Revenue per capita	Revenue per capita
N.A. Jurisdictional hierarchy (Murdock)	6.069***	6.788***	5.989***
	(2.71)	(3.16)	(2.78)
Chief in Council	13.20***		
	(3.47)		
Solo Chief	11.20***		
	(3.15)		
NA sets the budget		17.38***	
		(3.20)	
Number of chiefs per NA			-0.428***
			(-2.81)
Constant	24.86***	15.61***	22.23***
	(2.89)	(2.88)	(3.11)
Economic controls (cash crop, distance to city, railway)	Yes	Yes	Yes
Country dummies	Yes	Yes	Yes
N	189	189	189
R-sq	0.410	0.359	0.391

Source: Bolt and Gardner (2021)

Local institutions and spending patterns

	% expenditures on administration	% expenditures on public goods
Solo chief NA	59%	11%
NA includes a council	43%	23%

Source: Bolt, Gardner, Kohler, Paine and Robinson (2021)

Conclusion

- Local level governments under British Rule were very heterogenous
- Much of that heterogeneity is explained by pre-colonial institutions
- The majority of these institutions feature constraints on the executive in the form of meaningful councils
- The nature of local level governments mattered for both tax capacity and spending patterns
  - Higher spending on public goods such as education and health

Thank you!

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